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WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Preparatory Committee
Fourth session
Geneva, 19-30 April 1993
Agenda item 5

STATUS OF PREPARATION OF PUBLICATIONS, STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS FOR THE WORLD CONFERENCE

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Contribution from Church World Service and Witness of the National Council of Churches of Christ and the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church

The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the attached statement, which is an amended version of an earlier document entitled "Older Persons and Human Rights", submitted by three non-governmental organizations as a document of the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee (see A/CONF.157/PC/63/Add.17). This version was amended by Church World Service and Witness and adopted by that organization and by the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

OLDER PERSONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Background

The undersigned organizations are anxious to see all United Nations instruments on human rights applied equally to all human beings - men and women, young and old - and we believe that greater attention should be given to the specific needs and rights of older persons.

The elderly are the fastest growing percentage of the population around the globe but their rights are still largely undefined, and action on a number of fronts is required. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other relevant international instruments do not specifically mention the elderly in their provisions. While elderly constitute a "major group," the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNFED) of June 1992 did not include the elderly among the categories of major groups cited in its document Agenda 21. Further, in many countries the rights of older citizens are still not protected by law or by custom, or not protected adequately.

Older persons see their rights eroded or violated in a number of areas. Many suffer physical and mental neglect, and even violence within the family. Their dignity is often destroyed through negative stereotyping. Many lack adequate shelter, food and health care. They encounter discrimination in employment. Their economic security is frequently precarious and they lack financial resources of their own. The family is not the answer to all elderly needs. They may also be unable to obtain or to afford legal assistance if required. Cultural beliefs and practices are being undermined in ways that endanger the protection many peoples have traditionally accorded their elderly. Older persons are often denied the right to participate in decisions that affect them at the local, national and international levels.

Statement:

We, the undersigned, note that in recent years the United Nations and some countries have begun to address the rights of older persons. We urge the World Conference on Human Rights to focus attention on protecting the rights of the elderly around the globe, and particularly, to ensure that in the future:

That both age and gender are considered in the preparation of instruments that deal with issues relating to employment, housing, economic security, food security, criminal acts and physical abuse,the family, media, and indigenous peoples.

That the right of the elderly to present their concerns is fully respected.

That States be requested to report on the implementation of the International Covenants on Human Rights and other relevant international instruments (such as those dealing the racial discrimination, discrimination against women, refugees, torture, apartheid, children, environment) and include in their reports information on the elderly to be considered by the various bodies entrusted with the review of these reports.

That data and statistics on violence against individuals are compiled and tabulated by age and gender.

That the United Nations, governmental and non-governmental institutions work toward finding solutions for the long-term care of the elderly, especially those who are disabled, single and live alone.

(signed)

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